DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 60267
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Planning, Programs, and
Project Management Division
Environmental Planning
and Compliance Branch

PUBLIC NOTICE

Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock Replacement Project
Orleans Parish, Louisiana

Introduction. This Public Notice is issued in accordance with provisions of Title 33 CFR Parts 336.1(b)(1) and 337.1, which establish policy, practices, and procedures to be followed on federal actions involving the disposal of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

Project Authority. Authority for replacement of the navigation lock connecting the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and the Mississippi River was established in the River and Harbor Act of 1956 (Public Law 84-455). This was amended by Section 186 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1976 (Public Law 94-587) making the construction of bridges associated with the construction of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) channel a Federal responsibility. A Site Selection Report prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New Orleans District (CEMVN) and the Port of New Orleans, and approved by the Office of Engineers in 1976 recommended the Lower Site downstream of Violet, Louisiana as the best location for the new lock. The WRDA of 1986 (Public Law 99-662) modified the project to locate the new lock and connecting channels to be in the area of the existing lock or at the Violet site. The Violet site was considered as an alternative site that would have connected the river near English Turn through the St. Bernard Central Wetlands in Violet, Louisiana to the MRGO near Bayou Dupre. Furthermore, the WRDA of 1986 modified the project's cost-sharing agreement. In 1991, the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations drafted the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill (Report #101-536), which directed the USACE in conjunction with the local sponsor to develop a community impact mitigation plan to ensure that the communities adjacent to the project remain as complete, livable neighborhoods during and after construction. The WRDA of 1996 (PL 104-303) amended the WRDA of 1986 by requiring the implementation of a comprehensive community mitigation plan as described in the evaluation report of the New Orleans District Engineer dated August 1995. The WRDA of 2007 authorized funds to be appropriated to the Assistant Secretary for Economic Development to support the relocation of Port of New Orleans deep draft facilities from the MRGO, the GIWW, and the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) to the Mississippi River.

Location. The new lock would be constructed in the IHNC, north of the existing lock, between the Claiborne Avenue and Florida Avenue Bridges (Figure 1). The proposed action is located in Orleans Parish, Louisiana. The IHNC channel connects the Mississippi River, with the GIWW, the remaining authorized portion of the MRGO, and Lake Pontchartrain. The area potentially affected by changes in vessel traffic includes the navigation channels and related land

Figure 1: The Project Area and Feature Locations for the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal, New Orleans, Louisiana Project

areas in the vicinity of the project area and in the inland waterway system on the GIWW and the Mississippi River.

Project Description. The Float-in-Place (FIP) lock construction is the proposed action for the IHNC lock replacement project. Two separate construction locations would be needed for the FIP Plan, the Graving Site which allows for lock module construction in the dry, and the lock site. The main component of the plan is a new 1200-foot long by 110-foot wide by 36-foot deep lock connecting the Mississippi River with GIWW via the IHNC. Construction activities at the two sites, the IHNC and the Graving Site, would occur concurrently. The entire project construction schedule is expected to last about 11 years.

A bypass channel would be constructed east of the new lock site north of Claiborne Avenue. The bypass channel would be constructed by hydraulically dredging approximately 876,000 cubic yards (cy) of material to provide for 2-way barge traffic and 1-way ship traffic during lock construction. Three protection cells would be constructed at the south end of the bypass channel concurrent with channel dredging, and a timber guide wall installed before opening the channel.

Following the completion of the bypass channel, the footprint of the lock would be hydraulically dredged to a depth of -54 ft for the gatebay modules and -52 ft for the chamber modules. A total of approximately 708,950 cy of material would be hydraulically dredged within the lock footprint. Sheetpile would then be driven along the perimeter of the lock footprint to create a containment wall. A 3-foot thick stone base would be placed at the bottom of the lock footprint. A hopper box lowered to the bottom would be used to place the stone base. Eight 78-foot diameter protection cells would be constructed at both ends of the excavated area. Steel lock pipe piles, 120 ft long and 48 inches in diameter, would be driven within the footprint of the lock. A vibratory hammer would be used to drive piles above the water surface and a hydro-hammer used below the water surface.

As each lock module is floated to the lock site from the Graving Site, two of the protection cells located on the north end of the lock site would be removed to allow for the lock module passage. Following the placement of a lock module, the two protection cells would be rebuilt. This removal and replacement of protection cells would occur for each lock module. A batch plant for concrete production would be constructed on top of a platform placed on three of the protection cells.

The south lock module would need to be constructed and transported to the lock site first. Prior to the transport of each module, the Graving Site around that module would be flooded by removing the independent closure system. The closure materials would be stockpiled while the module floated out, the closure rebuilt and the site dewatered again for the next module. Tug boats would pull the lock module from the Graving Site to the lock site. It is anticipated that transport of a module would take one day, and the GIWW/MRGO would be closed to marine traffic during the towing. The module would then be attached to temporary mooring dolphins and then moved into place and attached directly to another already installed lock module.

Using sand ballast, the lock module would be positioned horizontally and vertically in its correct position. Grouting of lock module sections, placement of mechanical components, and underbase infilling would then be completed. The lock module's structural load would then be transferred from jacks (which were holding the lock module in place while the concrete was setting) to the piles. Flooding and then dewatering of the lock module (and adjacent lock modules) would be done to test mechanical equipment and grouted seals.

These same steps would be completed for each of the lock modules until the new lock is completed. Mechanical and electrical components would be installed after all of the lock modules are in place. The lock would be tested, the channel protection cells removed from both ends of the lock, protection riprap placed at both ends of the lock, and the lock opened to traffic. Once the new lock is fully operational, the bypass channel would be closed and new guidewalls put into place. At this time the water depth in the new lock would still be controlled by the old lock. The bypass channel would be filled with a combination of sand and stockpiled dredged material to an elevation of +5 ft.

Levees and floodwalls south of the new lock would be raised and tied into the Mississippi River flood protection system. A channel would be constructed around the old lock and the old lock demolished. The new lock would then be fully functional.

The Graving Site has been previously used as a dredge material disposal area but has not been used in recent years and has since overgrown with early successional woods and scrub/shrub habitat. It is mostly jurisdictional wetlands. The majority of the proposed Graving Site is located on the flood side of GIWW/MRGO and is subject to tidal influence with the exception of a small portion of the area. The proposed Graving Site encompasses 34 acres. To prepare the Graving Site for lock module construction, all of the vegetation on the site would be removed, the flood protection levee relocated, and a small drainage canal rerouted. The site would then be excavated in the wet to a depth of -31 ft National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) with 1:5 (vertical:horizontal) side slopes and some excavated material used to reinforce the flood protection levee along the GIWW. It is estimated that a total of 664,000 cy of material would be excavated. Of that total, 112,000 cy of material would be used to reinforce the berm and relocated levee and the remaining 552,000 cy stockpiled east of the Graving Site within a temporary containment facility. The Graving Site would be dewatered and dewatering maintained for 4 - 5 years during the construction of the lock modules, except during movement of the lock modules from the site. Electricity would be brought to the site along the Paris Road right-of-way for module construction activities and pumping. Pumps for dewatering activities would discharge into the GIWW. A 30-foot wide separating berm, which would provide separation for lock module construction efforts, would be constructed and then removed, and reconstructed four additional times, between each of the lock modules as they are completed and floated out of the GIWW. Following the construction of the lock modules, stockpiled excavated material and any material imported for the realigned levee construction would be used to fill the Graving Site and return the Graving Site to the preconstruction elevation. The flood protection levee would be reconstructed to its current alignment and authorized elevation.

Six disposal sites are required for this project: the main channel of the Mississippi River (River Site); an area where IHNC channel material would be deposited to develop wetlands as mitigation for project impacts (the Mitigation Site); the confined disposal facility (CDF) site where soils and sediments demonstrating benthic toxicity and considered unsuitable for aquatic disposal would be deposited (CDF Disposal Site); a CDF site adjacent but separate from the CDF Disposal Site where material that is suitable for open water disposal – but needed for construction backfill – would be temporarily stockpiled for later use as backfill and capping material (CDF Backfill Site); the Graving Site and its associated stockpile site (Graving Site); and the new lock (IHNC Backfill Site) that would require backfill of the bypass channels after construction of the new lock. Refer to Figure 1 for the location of these features.

Nearly 2.2 million cy of material would be dredged from the IHNC during construction. The dredged material disposal plan consists of two open-water disposal areas that have been proposed for dredged material excavated as part of the lock replacement project. The River Site would serve as a primary disposal site for material deemed suitable for fresh water disposal. Approximately 1.2 million cy of material would be deposited into the River Site. Dredged material would be discharged unconfined into the Mississippi River disposal site and is expected to disperse. Since material from the project is being reused at both the Mitigation Site and the IHNC Backfill Site, these sites are considered beneficial use sites. The Mitigation Site is a 440 acre site located northeast of the IHNC in a triangular area of subsided marsh bounded by Bayou Bienvenue, an Orleans Parish sewerage treatment plant, and the Ninth Ward back protection levee. It is anticipated that approximately 254,000 cy of material would be placed in the Mitigation Site. Material would be placed semi-confined into the Mitigation Site to create a sub-aerial platform at typical marsh elevations to create approximately 85 acres of wetlands for mitigation. It is anticipated that wetland plants would colonize this platform, and that the disposal site would transform into a functioning marsh. It is anticipated that approximately 354,000 cy of material would be placed as backfill at the IHNC Backfill Site after construction of the new lock.

The CDF Disposal Site and CDF Backfill Site would be constructed to accommodate dredged material that has been deemed unsuitable for discharge into open-water or would be temporarily stockpiled and later utilized as backfill around the lock construction site. The CDF is located in an area bounded by the north bank of Bayou Bienvenue and the Chalmette Loop hurricane protection levee on the south bank of the GIWW, near the intersection of the IHNC and the GIWW. The proposed CDF Disposal site is composed of heavily wooded scrub/shrub wetland habitat and was historically part of the intertidal marsh and swamp system. The area was previously used as a dredge material disposal area in 1958 and 1959, which raised the elevation. The CDF Disposal Site is 71 acres in size. After material is placed and dewatered, it is anticipated that 317,000 cy of material would permanently remain in the CDF Disposal Site. The CDF Backfill Site is 138 acres in size. After the material is placed and dewatered, 404,000 cy would temporarily remain in the CDF Backfill Site and would be available for construction backfill at the IHNC Backfill Site and as a source of capping material for the CDF Disposal Site.

The proposed action itself consists of measures to minimize the adverse effects of storm water erosion and thus requires no separate measures or controls for compliance with CWA Section 402(p) and LAC 33:IX.2341.B.14.j.

Discharges by Others. No accurate estimate can be given to the amounts and/or frequency of dredging required to maintain non-Federal facilities in the vicinity of this project.

Other Information. A draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock Replacement project, was mailed to the public for a 45-day review on October 10, 2008. The public comment period is set to end on November 24, 2008. The draft SEIS is available at http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/prj/ihnc/. Copies are also available through the point of contact identified at the end of this notice.

Properties Adjacent to Disposal Sites. The Port of New Orleans maintains several waterfront properties along the IHNC and the Mississippi River adjacent to the proposed project. A Naval Support Facility exists along the Mississippi River and along Press Street near the intersection of the river and IHNC. Several residential neighborhoods are located in the vicinity of the project area including the Holy Cross, Lower Ninth Ward, and Bywater neighborhoods. There are other businesses in the area including metal and scrap recycling yards and marine-related businesses.

Status of SEIS and Other Environmental Documents. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) confirmed by letter dated September 19, 2008 that the proposed action would not be likely to adversely affect any threatened or endangered species. Environmental compliance for the proposed action would be achieved upon: coordination of the SEIS with appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals for their review and comments; National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) confirmation that the proposed action would not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species; Louisiana Department of Natural Resources concurrence with the determination that the proposed action is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program; receipt of a Water Quality Certificate from the State of Louisiana; public review of the Section 404(b)(1) Public Notice; signature of the Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation; receipt of the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer Determination of No Affect on cultural resources; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all USFWS Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recommendations; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality comments on the air quality impact analysis; and receipt and acceptance or resolution of all NMFS Essential Fish Habitat recommendations. The Record of Decision would not be signed until the proposed action achieves environmental compliance with applicable laws and regulations, as described above.

Coordination. The following is a partial list of agencies to which a copy of this notice is being sent:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VI
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National Marine Fisheries Service
U.S. Coast Guard, Eighth District
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer

This notice is being distributed to these and other appropriate Congressional, federal, state, and local interests, environmental organizations, and other interested parties.

Evaluation Factors. Evaluation includes application of the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, through 40 CFR 230.

Public Involvement. Interested parties may express their views on the disposal of material associated with the proposed action or suggest modifications. All comments postmarked on or before the expiration of the comment period for this notice will be considered.

A public meeting will be held on November 12, 2008 at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School at 1617 Caffin Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will serve the dual purpose of allowing the public to comment on the draft SEIS and associated deposition of fill material into the waters of the U.S.

You are requested to communicate the information contained in this notice to any parties who may have an interest in the proposed action.

For further information regarding the proposed action, please contact Mr. Richard Boe at (504) 862-1505. Mr. Boe's FAX number is (504) 862-2088, and his E-mail address is richard.e.boe@usace.army.mil.

Elizabeth Wiggins
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and Compliance Branch

COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS PUBLIC NOTICE EXPIRES: November 12, 2008